

Back to Basics: Redefining CSS Principles

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Introduction: Redefining CSS Principles

Straying from time-tested Marine Corps basics, the Combat Service Support (CSS) community currently operates in a gray area of piece-meal tactics and business procedures. MCDP-1, *Warfighting*, warns that, "Without a clearly identified concept and intent, the necessary unity of effort is inconceivable."¹ Lack of unity of effort is caused by the indistinctness of the seven principles of logistics, outlined in FMFM 4-1, *Combat Service Support Operations* as responsiveness, simplicity, flexibility, economy, attainability, sustainability, and survivability.² These inconsistent principles have forced the CSS community to chase both efficiency and effectiveness at the cost of supporting today's Marine Corps. As Lieutenant Colonel Chandler succinctly stated, "The dynamics of EMW [Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare] has exceeded the dynamics of our logistics chain."³ While Logistics Modernization is currently working to address the symptoms, a basic reordering of logistics doctrine must first be addressed. The CSS community must identify focused principles of support to bring unity of effort to the struggle of supporting EMW. As such, the seven principles of Marine Corps logistics should be narrowed to three principles that align with time-tested *Warfighting* fundamentals: simplicity, flexibility, and effectiveness.

The Road Ahead: Logistics Modernization

Unbeknownst to most CSS Marines, logistics is moving in a new direction. Logistics Modernization, based on the Logistics Operational Architecture (LogOA), will soon drive Marine Corps logistics efforts. These terms may sound unfamiliar because the supporting documents, though referenced in multiple articles in the August 2004 Marine Corps Gazette, cannot be found on the Installation and Logistics (I&L) website or in current source documents. The only way to view these documents is to contact I&L and ask for them. The "Logistics Operational Architecture Handbook" is a 130-page document that explains the future of Marine Corps logistics practices in nearly indecipherable business terms. Guided by either the current disharmonious seven principles of CSS -- or worse, none at all -- the LogOA Handbook will act as the baseline for future changes to logistics doctrine. According to a Marine Corps Gazette article by Mr. Rineaman, "The LogOA allows us to articulate where our logistics modernization is going and how we plan to get there by providing a framework to articulate future requirements for doctrine, policy, education, force structure, and organization... the LogOA is really the bedrock for all future logistics modernization affecting people (education), process changes (logistics procedures), and technology (IT systems)."⁴ General Neal describes the disadvantage of LogOA in

layman's terms: "Logistics modernization had always been described in logistics and business terms instead of language that would actually mean something to the warfighter. There had been too much focus on the efficiencies to be gained and not enough on effectiveness, the warfighter's primary concern."⁵ This nebulous architecture is an attempt to repair an obviously stressed and broken system, demonstrated by the disappointments of the support provided during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). Lieutenant Colonel Broadmeadow captured these problems in a Marine Corps Gazette article:

In computer systems alone, there are multiple, incompatible systems; I MEF uses supported activities supply system and Asset Tracking Supply System; II MEF uses ATLAST II; Blount Island Command uses a commercial supply system for maritime prepositioning force equipment... the supply system architecture planned for use during OIF was a 'workaround' combination of systems and methods... that never permitted visibility at the battalion or division level of a requisition from inception to receipt. Problems were directly attributable to the incompatibility of these systems, lack of training in their use, lack of a standard method of passing supply requisitions from MF units through an MLC (Marine Logistics Command), and lack of a dedicated logistics communication architecture.⁶

The Logistics Modernization effort addresses the importance of the concepts of simplicity and flexibility in some forms and plans on implementing a common information technology (IT) architecture across the CSS community. This common IT architecture is GCSS-MC, "The Global Combat Support System -

Marine Corps (GCSS-MC) became a program of record on 1 October 2003 and has been designated an acquisition Category 1 program (one of only two Marine Corps programs, along with the expeditionary fighting vehicle).⁷ The application of GCSS-MC will provide CSS units with the flexibility to support units the same way every time. As a result, units requesting support and units providing support will finally speak the same language.

However, the CSS community still operates under an organizational structure which works seemingly well in garrison, but that creates deployment complications that are only overcome by significant task organization changes. The symptoms -- nightmarish CSS organization/structure, a lack of common IT, and dissimilar logistics processes -- are part of a larger problem: the lack of cohesive doctrine unifying the CSS effort. Under Logistics Modernization efforts, some of the task organization changes realized in OIF would carry back to garrison and the Force Service Support Groups (FSSGs) would be re-named and re-organized. As General Kelly demands, "We cannot just fix the IT, or rework the process, or reorganize and expect improvement. We must have the courage and tenacity to take all of this on - simultaneously and now! If we do not do this we will only see the lessons learned again and again."⁸ According to General Neal, "the Marine Corps' systemic logistics problems reduce the combat effectiveness of the MAGTF. These problems were the same

ones we experienced in ODS [Operation DESERT STORM] over a decade ago."⁹ The systemic problem is that the CSS community lacks a unifying effort. Once again, IT architecture and a plan have been forwarded in order to influence doctrine -- before taking a hard look at doctrine itself.

Simplicity

Marine Corps doctrine recognizes that "the common denominator in all healthy logistics organizations is the combination of a shared vision and initiative."¹⁰ However, Marine Corps logisticians never truly defined a shared vision. The seven disparate principles of logistics outlined in FMFM 4-1 have created a shotgun effect of effort, sending some logisticians in the direction of economy, while others chase responsiveness. MCDP-4 sets forth five emerging trends of warfare: (1) the expanding battlespace, (2) the continued compression of reaction times during operations, (3) the establishment of a wide variety of missions, (4) the expanding use of advanced technology, (5) and the increased integration of military logistics with the commercial world.¹¹ These are complex problems that, at first glance, must be solved by the creation of bigger and more complicated logistics systems. However, tackling these problems individually as symptoms will create more disasters in the long run. The Marine Corps must concentrate its focus on the underlying problem. Paring the

principles down to a basic three applicable to all situations would guarantee viable solutions. Our warfighting mentality "requires a concept that is consistently effective across the full spectrum of conflict because we cannot attempt to change our basic doctrine from situation to situation and expect to be proficient."¹² The very nature of the Marine Corps demands the simplest possible solution to any problem. Simplicity minimizes the effects of the fog of war and the human dimension. Simplicity ensures that every Marine is aware of, and can execute, the plan. Simplicity allows Marines and systems the maneuver room required to change the plan when needed. The more complicated a system is, the more likely outside influences will act upon it and cause undesirable and unintended effects.

Flexibility: Adapting to Tomorrow's Battlefield

The United States Marine Corps demands an inherent flexibility from its supporting units. *Wartfighting* states that "We must be prepared to adapt to changing circumstances and exploit opportunities as they arise, rather than adhering insistently to predetermined plans that have outlived their usefulness."¹³ The CSS community must embrace this principle as wholeheartedly as the ground combat element. *Wartfighting* further explains how to achieve flexibility, stating, "All peacetime activities should focus on achieving combat readiness. This implies a high level of training, flexibility in

organization and equipment, professional leadership, and a cohesive doctrine.¹⁴ The CSS community's professional leadership, combined with a unifying doctrine (focused on simplicity, flexibility, and effectiveness), can result in a well-trained, flexible supporting unit. Today's fluid battlefield demands that the CSS community stand ready to support multiple missions under demanding circumstances. Only the most flexible support can stand the test of the future.

Effectiveness: Producing the Desired Effect

Effectiveness, the true measure of support, is not included with the original seven principles in FMFM 4-1. Instead, the seven principles include responsiveness. Responsiveness is defined as "giving response: something constituting a reply or a reaction."¹⁵ A misnomer, responsiveness implies any type of support is acceptable, even if it is three sizes too small. Even worse, the term responsiveness, combined with economy, implies that CSS should deliver whatever it has on hand in a manner that is best suited to the supporting unit. However, such support is often ineffective in today's demanding environments. Rather, striving for effectiveness, or "producing the decided, decisive, or desired effect,"¹⁶ should be the goal of every CSS Marine. Because effective support is responsive, accurate, sustainable, survivable, and flexible, it ultimately encompasses many of the other principles held dear to the CSS

community. Furthermore, in the long term, effective support should improve efficiency as efforts align and processes are streamlined.

The Unifying Effort: Simplicity, Flexibility, and Effectiveness

In order to simplify relationships between supported and supporting units, provide flexible transition from garrison to deployed environments, and provide effective support, CSS should be pushed down to the lowest possible level. *Warfighting* states, "Operating forces should be organized for warfighting and then adapted for peacetime rather than vice versa."¹⁷ The CSS community has blatantly ignored this basic tenet for too long. As such, CSS units should be placed in direct support roles for ground combat units while in garrison in order to mirror deployment as close as possible. The creation of direct support units would eliminate any need for a "middle man" and allow a habitual relationship to form between the two units. Effective support, combined with a habitual relationship between supported and supporting units, could even reach the realm of intuitive. *Warfighting* explains that "Commanders should establish habitual relationships between supported and supporting units to develop operational familiarity among those units."¹⁸

LogOA touches upon the concept of CSS units in direct support of supported units. Under the LogOA model, the supported unit is given a single point of contact for

coordination of CSS matters. This single point of contact is actually a staff, functioning much like a Combat Service Support Operations Center (CSSOC).¹⁹ This staff would have no assets to fulfill requests, but would instead route requests to other CSS units.²⁰ This additional link in the CSS chain will only make the system weaker. In contrast, permanent direct support CSS units would provide flexible and effective support, with the benefits of habitual relationships. If the direct support unit could not support a request, it would be pushed to a larger and more robust CSS element acting in general support of several of the direct support units. This change would demand common logistic processes throughout the MAGTF, and integrated with GCSS-MC as the common IT, would provide simple, flexible, and effective support to any supported unit.

Conclusion: Three Principles For Success

MCDP-4 explains that "The relationship between logistics and military operations can therefore be stated as: logistics sets the outward limit on what is operationally possible. A useful analogy is that of a paddle ball, a toy consisting of a wooden paddle, a ball, and a piece of string. Logistics is like the string; it doesn't determine where the ball will go but sets the limit on how far it can go before being pulled back."²¹ At the end of their string under current principles, the CSS community requires cohesive doctrine to serve as a unifying

effort. Too often, the logistics community has identified a symptom and treated it, without consideration of the underlying disease. Doctrine must provide the common denominator for the push to conquer the support challenges of EMW. Applying the principles of simplicity, flexibility, and effectiveness to the processes, technology, and organization/structure of the CSS community will result in long-lasting successes.

Notes

¹ United States Marine Corps, *MCDP-1: Warfighting* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1997), 82. Cited hereafter as MCDP-1.

² United States Marine Corps, *FMFM 4-1: Combat Service Support Operations* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1993), 1-4.

³ John Chandler, "The Courage to Change," *Marine Corps Gazette*, August 2004, 24.

⁴ Keith Rineaman and Robert Ruark, "The Logistics Architecture: Our Sandtable for Logistics Modernization," *Marine Corps Gazette*, August 2004, 28.

⁵ Richard I. Neal, Bruce B. Knutson Jr, Raymond P. Ayres Jr, and Gary S. Mickissock, "An Imperative for Change: The Case for Logistics Modernization," *Marine Corps Gazette*, August 2004, 24. Cited hereafter as Neal.

⁶ John J. Broadmeadow, "Logistics support to 1st Marine Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom," *Marine Corps Gazette*, August 2003, 28.

⁷ Kelly, Richard R., "Logistics Modernization: A Marine Corps Warfighting Imperative," *Marine Corps Gazette*, August 2004, 17. Cited hereafter as Kelly.

⁸ Kelly, 18.

⁹ Neal, 23.

¹⁰ United States Marine Corps, *MCDP-4: Logistics* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1997), 14. Cited hereafter as MCDP-4.

¹¹ MCDP-4, 41-44.

¹² MCDP-1, 71.

¹³ MCDP-1, 81.

¹⁴ MCDP-1, 53.

¹⁵ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, online ed., 2004, under the term "responsiveness" URL: <<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=responsiveness&x=18&y=12>>, accessed 6 January 2005.

¹⁶ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, online ed., 2004, under the term "effectiveness," URL: <<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=effectiveness>>, accessed 6 January 2005.

¹⁷ MCDP-1, 55.

¹⁸ MCDP-1, 55.

¹⁹ "Logistics Operational Architecture Handbook", Point Paper, n.p., n.d. Provided on 16 December 2004 by Installation and Logistics (USMC) employee GS-14 Eric Rineaman, 17. Cited hereafter as LogOA Handbook.

²⁰ LogOA Handbook, 20.

²¹ MCDP-4, 30.

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